

A hotel for businesses

Over five years My Office Services at Frenchs Forest on Sydney's Northern Beaches has helped over 500 locals focus on their core business. Serviced Offices are proving to be an increasingly popular option for local businesses.

When the economy tightens businesses are forced to question their overheads and look for solutions. Jo Herringe, Director of My Office Service, explains "Clients find our Serviced Offices not only save them money it helps them refocus on their core business."

A Serviced Office is a simple concept. Businesses rent only the space they need for their own staff desks. Everything else is shared.

My Office Services relocated in 2009 to new premises. Jo explains "the individual offices are larger, the views are better, the reception is brilliant and the kitchen facilities superb."

The premises are ideally positioned near the intersection of two of the area's main local roads Warringah Rd and Wakehurst Parkway. In spite of the economic climate Jo is expecting the business to grow and expand into an additional adjoining space later this year.

Small businesses can spend a ridiculous amount of time, money and mental energy on under-utilised infrastructure. Photocopiers, internet access, phone systems and even kitchen facilities are all examples. In a Serviced Office these resources are shared and everyone enjoys the savings.

Jo shares the story of one client renting an office which included its own board room. Their board room was rarely used for meetings so he was basically renting a very expensive lunch room for staff. At My Office Services the boardroom can be hired by the hour when needed. For this client it made a lot more business sense and actually gave them better presentation facilities.

Jo has been working in Serviced Offices for 10 years. Prior to this she was in the hotel trade for 15 years which she says it was quite similar. "We are like a hotel for businesses with the same level of service and professionalism. Some businesses check in for a month and

others have stayed with us for years. The flexibility appeals to business managers. For some businesses we are a stepping stone up to them having their own premises. Others are businesses who have realised having their own premises was an expense and distraction they

couldn't justify."

While hotels catering for tourists may suffer this year, My Office Services popularity as a hotel for businesses looks likely to grow.



It's a Virtual World

Once upon a time home based businesses were looked down upon. Virtual Offices now mean these businesses can enjoy the advantage of a business address, meeting rooms and reception yet still work from home.

Home based businesses have grown dramatically over the last 10 years. Virtual Offices are another modern phenomena catering for this growth. My Office Services currently has over 60 Virtual Office clients. These include IT consultants, lawyers, conveyancers, curtain companies, web and graphic designers.

Home based businesses can be perceived negatively by some larger businesses. They can worry about dealing with someone who just has a website and Post Office Box.

Virtual Offices let a small business appear to have a traditional bricks and mortar office yet still operate out of home. If they need to meet with a client they simply hire a meeting room by the hour. The image is far more professional and reassures their clients. Their phone calls, mail and deliveries can all come via the Virtual Office so as far as their clients are concerned this is their full time office. It is simply a better use of limited resources for small businesses to lift their image in a cost effective way.

My Office Services answer calls, takes messages, send SMS or forward calls as directed. Some virtual clients will have 50 calls a month and others 300. For both extremes it is better value than having their own full time receptionist.

Do you, or your clients, need to cut business overheads?

Neil Pierson's story may help you. He was asked to manage a young Sydney business. Like many small businesses the directors had hoped it would be much bigger by the time he stepped in. The business concept was viable but the overheads were eating away at any profits and preventing it reaching its potential.

Renting 100sqm of office space was an unnecessary expense for the nature of the business Neil was asked to manage. Having spent several weeks looking at options to downsize he found it discouraging. When he asked his accounts person for a complete listing of all the fixed overheads he realised rent was really only part of the problem. The photocopier, internet, telephone systems, security, cleaning and even garbage collection were all hurting.

Neil knew it would take much more than cutting out buying biscuits to make the business viable. It was obvious some drastic action was required to cut overheads and fast. Even a dramatic increase in sales would have not justified the level of overheads. Fortunately someone suggested a serviced office with My Office Services at Frenchs Forest.

Neil shares his first impressions. "After looking at so many local office spaces when I walked in the reception impressed me. The boardroom, photocopier and yes even the biscuits were all better. The atmosphere was professional yet friendly. The deciding factor was the cost. Having now a true picture of our fixed overheads My Office Services represented an amazing saving of over 50%."

The shorter lease was also a lot easier to commit to for a young business. Their previous lease had been for three years which is a long time when starting out. He felt moving in to a Serviced Office was a smart business move.

Yet for Neil there was an expected surprise. "Once we moved in we found

we were more productive. Being a small business we had a very common all hands on deck approach. This had included answering phones. Now we had a professional receptionist taking calls and, determining the best person to forward them to or taking a message. We could have staff meetings knowing a client wouldn't be speaking to the answering machine. Keeping our phone numbers and Post Box while having a new receptionist actually gave clients the impression we were a growing business."

When asked if he would make the same

decision again Neil's reply was clear. "If cutting overheads is necessary then I can tell you from experience My Serviced Offices is worth checking out."

"Even if overheads are not the driving factor My Office Services makes good sense for many businesses. In hindsight it would have been better to start the business there and see how it went than them spending three years paying too much rent waiting for it to grow. Looking back I can say; we saved a LOT of money, our business image improved and yes the biscuits really were better".

My accountant laughed when he discovered I only paid my receptionist \$160 + GST per month.

Then he took a closer look ...

It's not illegal, she works full time and yes, lives in Australia. Virtual Offices are increasingly popular with Sydney's small businesses seeking a professional edge over their competition.

My Office Services provides Virtual Offices for over 50 clients throughout Sydney.

For only \$160 + GST you can have up to 300 calls answered each month.

They take the time to learn about your business, how to answer common questions, and what action you want taken. Your own phone number is answered as your business, calls put through to wherever you are, messages taken, SMS sent to you, or the client

dealt with on your behalf. It's like having your own full time receptionist without the overheads.

First Impressions count. People are tired of voice mail and phone menus. Discover what a difference it makes having a real person answer your business calls quickly and professionally.

Give your accountant something to laugh about. Call Leonie today on 02 9454 7777.



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